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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

October 13, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

FROM: JESSICA TUCHMAN MATHEWS JT

SUBJECT: Regional Human Rights Assessments

As I mentioned to you in our talk earlier this week, if you find them useful, I plan to prepare one of these each week on a different region of the globe for use in the President's weekly report.

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~

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Review of Human Rights Developments -- Latin America

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In each case, we believe that US policy has been a positive force with demonstrable impact:

- In the Dominican Republic, the successful -- though shaky -- transition through a democratic process, from a traditionally-based government to one espousing change, has been a critical advance, and has had a big impact in the Caribbean as well as the entire region.
- After eight years of inaction with one only two signatories, the American Convention has finally come into force. It now has 12 signatories and ratifications.
- Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and to a certain extent Brazil, have all taken steps away from de facto military regimes and toward constitutional democratic institutions. While the Bolivian electoral fiasco indicates the distances still to be covered, in all these cases there have been significant improvements in the freedom for political expression, and reductions in the abuses of the person and denial of due process.
- While the situation in Nicaragua is still in flux, the challenge to Somoza's rule is by no means unrelated to the rising hemispheric focus on human rights.
- This year the Inter-American Human Rights Commission issued serious and well-prepared reports on Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. It also visited El Salvador, Panama, and Haiti, and we expect that in the coming year it will visit Nicaragua, Argentina and perhaps Paraguay. Also in the near future we expect to see the creation of a hemispheric Court of Rights and a continuing increase in the influence and credibility of the Commission.
- Cuba has recently released a number of political prisoners and indicated that perhaps as many as 1,000 persons may be permitted to emigrate if they wish. These decisions end a long history of stonewalling on this issue. Cuba has also recently permitted the emigration of some Cubans to permit the reunification of families.

While there are still many very serious human rights problems in the hemisphere, and several countries where we have not yet seen serious signs of change, and though at times the cost to our bilateral relations has been substantial, the over-all record of achievement of our human rights policy in Latin America appears to be unquestionably positive.

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